

## **CHIEF FLYNN'S REMARKS AT HIS THIRD SWEARING-IN**

**January 8, 2016**

Thank you - each of you - for joining me today. I am honored to continue my service to the City of Milwaukee, this police department, and all of our communities, neighborhoods and residents.

Thank you Mayor Barrett, Chairman Witkowski, and Chairman DeVougas. I appreciate and depend on your continued support, confidence and enthusiastic interest in ensuring the Milwaukee Police Department performs at the highest levels in the pursuit of our mission.

Yesterday was the eighth anniversary of my swearing-in as the 20th Milwaukee police chief. In some ways, it literally feels like it was only yesterday. But when I reflect upon the dramatic improvements in the department's organizational capacity, operational effectiveness, technological capability, community partnerships, and national reputation for excellence, I am acutely aware that much time indeed has passed and an extraordinary amount of work has been done.

I am proud of the work of the men and women of the Milwaukee Police Department. They are the ones who have implemented an aggressive reform agenda. Due to their efforts, we are a community-based, problem-oriented, data-driven organization. Our members are animated by their core values of courage, competence, leadership, integrity, respect and restraint. Their motivation is derived from the shared goal of realizing our collective vision of a Milwaukee where all can live safely and without fear, protected by a police department with the highest ethical and professional standards. Our shared mission has been - and remains - that in partnership with the community we will create and maintain neighborhoods capable of sustaining civic life. Towards these ends, every member, regardless of assignment, has dedicated themselves.

Our accomplishments have not been achieved unaided. Recognition must be accorded to Mayor Barrett and members of the Common Council who have, during times of fiscal austerity, consistently provided the Milwaukee Police Department strong budgets supportive of our collective efforts. During these past eight years, more than 400 police officers have been hired, helping us keep pace with attrition. At the same time, significant capital investments have been made in our information and technological infrastructures. Our police officers have continued to receive raises and their pension, unlike those in most American cities, is fully funded. Additionally, Mayor Barrett has been a consistent supporter of our efforts to control crime, fear and disorder in our neighborhoods. While insisting that we be respectful of our diverse communities, he has stood by us in difficult times. We have also had extraordinary support from the Fire and Police Commission and city departments throughout the administration that have collaborated with us to improve the quality of life in our city. I am grateful to the Commissioners who have served on the Fire and Police Commission during my tenure and all of my peer department heads for their commitment to our shared vision of public service.

When we reset the Milwaukee Police Department's mission eight years ago, we committed to becoming a community-based, problem-oriented and data-driven agency. We knew this would require a renewed focus on performance metrics, so we built a Compstat that continues to evolve today. We knew this would require a fresh and innovative perspective on officer accountability and discipline, so we became a

values-based agency with a code of conduct founded on our six core values of competence, courage, integrity, leadership, respect and restraint. We knew this would require major overhauls to the nearly-defunct records management and communication systems, so we overcame financial, capacity, and political barriers alike to generate timely and accurate tactical crime data and become the first major city in the country to implement a fully-encrypted, interoperable, digital radio system. And that was just the first two years.

Since then, we have earned more than three dozen national and international awards for our community-based, problem-oriented and data-driven work, including some of the most prestigious recognition in the field. All the while, we have been fighting crime on every front. Despite a dramatic spike in gun crimes and homicides in 2015, over the past eight years, the members of this Department have achieved six of the lowest eight homicide totals in the last twenty-five years and have driven the occurrence of property and violent crime down in pursuit of our mission.

We are proud of our accomplishments, including: our recent statewide accreditation, indicating that our policies and management systems meet the highest standards in our profession; our innovative Ambassador Program as part of the Mayor's Compete Milwaukee initiative; our nationally-recognized STOP Program focused on developing mutually-beneficial relationships with the next generation of our civic leaders; our robust Homeless Outreach Team efforts targeting some of our city's most disadvantaged; our cutting-edge implementation of crime-fighting technologies like ShotSpotter; and our aggressive implementation of body-worn cameras, which has already proven beneficial to both officers and the people they are sworn to protect alike. These are just a few examples of our commitment to reducing and preventing crime while building grass-roots community support and acclimating our agency to the principles of continuous and evolutionary reform. I am proud of the work we have done, and I invite you to be proud of your police department too.

None of this is to suggest that we are without our challenges. There remains much work to be done. Indeed, there always will. And I - along with the members of this agency - am up to meeting these challenges head-on.

The national coverage about policing undeniably has created a crisis of confidence throughout the country and, of course, affects attitudes here in Milwaukee. And we realize that incidents of misconduct – even when identified and investigated and publicized first by us – still summon painful memories going back many decades.

The facts indicate that our use of force is down, citizen complaints against us have decreased 75% since 2007, and our purposeful, proactive policing has dramatically increased. While community support for this agency and the work of its members is objectively high, there remains a gap between the perceptions of black and white residents. This is something we remain committed to addressing – and measuring – as we continue our community-minded reforms.

The facts also indicate - year after year after year, regardless of whether we have record-low shootings and homicides or record high shootings and homicides - that the greatest criminal justice system disparity in Milwaukee is the appalling disparity of violent crime victimization. Nearly 9 of every 10 shooting and homicide victims in our city are African American. African Americans are 8.4 times more likely than whites to be killed in our city. African Americans are 17.1 times more likely to be shot. We the police

have a moral obligation to do something about it. And this requires us to use data analysis, technology and targeted deployments to affect the most violent and vulnerable neighborhoods. And we have to accept the risk that our lifesaving attempts will be used by some to accuse us of racial profiling, over-policing and contributing to mass incarceration. That harsh reality demands that no discussion of police tactics takes place separate of this discussion of disparate victimization in our most disadvantaged neighborhoods. We accept the responsibility to be fair, impartial, respectful, and restrained, as well as effective. And we expect political and community leadership to direct the same level of concern about the unacceptable levels of neighborhood violence in their communities as well as police attempts to reduce the violence. We must address concerns about both procedural justice and substantive justice. We cannot fairly or effectively affect one without full consideration of the other. However, it is time for the parallel conversations to stop; our collective effort toward these mutual must-haves - procedurally sound policing and substantively effective policing - will generate exponential progress.

Notwithstanding the high levels of community support for our policing efforts, as measured by the citizen survey commissioned by the Fire and Police Commission, as exemplified by our leading work on the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program and the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation program, and as highlighted in community partnerships with organizations like Safe & Sound and LISC, the fact remains that the building of community trust is a permanent issue - as it should be. No police leader can assert that he or she has forever secured the trust of the community they are responsible for protecting. Each of us understands that one critical incident can strip decades of training, progress, reform and success from our agency's reputation.

The fact remains that critical incidents drive public opinion more than data. Although our data plainly demonstrate that there is neither a pattern nor practice of unlawful, unethical or improper policing in Milwaukee, concerns about community trust motivated me to request the U.S. Department of Justice enter into a Collaborative Reform agreement with the Milwaukee Police Department.

We will be working with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to examine our existing systems and processes aimed at building community support, and I am confident that the COPS office will be very impressed with the strides we have taken in organizational reform and community policing. In no uncertain terms, we will implement the recommendations of the consultants and the Department of Justice, and we will continue to become better.

Additionally, I am pleased to again report that the response from our local, state and federal partners indicates a broad willingness to collectively attack the problems of violence and crime afflicting some of our neighborhoods. I will continue to pursue every available resource - from strategic and technical assistance to national academic research to good old fashioned focused overtime deployments. I welcome the Attorney General's recent assignment of two Assistant Attorneys General to help us more aggressively prosecute armed criminals, and I will continue our active engagement in high-impact task forces with the FBI, ATF, DEA and U.S. Attorney. I will also continue my eight-year advocacy for common sense changes to permissive gun laws that arm criminals and give them relative impunity while putting our communities at risk. It is time for our elected leaders to stop using gun laws as a wedge issue and accept their ethical responsibilities to protect the lives of Americans. Changes today may not have an impact on tomorrow's crime, but they will save lives in the future. While we have no idea how many

lives would have been saved in the last few years if common sense had prevailed sooner, we must remember that government is accountable for the future, not just the present.

Eight years ago, I made specific promises to the officers, supervisors and commanders of this agency, the elected and appointed leaders of this city, and the residents in our neighborhoods and communities. Today, I want to remind us all of those promises, as they are as alive today as they were eight years ago, notwithstanding the progress we have achieved.

To our officers, I recommit myself to do all that I can to see that you are properly trained, equipped, supervised and supported. We have made strong strides in each of these arenas, from our aggressive implementation of Crisis Intervention Training to our continual investments in technology, I promise to never stop the evolution of this Department. I continue to believe in you. I maintain my confidence in you. I recognize that police work today - more than any time in my nearly five decades of experience - is extremely difficult and brings with it real emotional and physical dangers. And I remind you that our work has meaning, and that the greatest antidote to cynicism is a sense of accomplishment in an environment of support and acceptance.

To my command staff and supervisory officers, I recommit myself to empowering you and developing your potential as leaders. Our experience with the Leadership in Police Organizations is but the start; your growth as managers and leaders is essential to the long-term success of this agency in achieving its mission.

To those in my authorizing political environment, from the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners to the Council, Mayor, District Attorney, Attorney General, and all of our system partners, I recommit to the prudent management of the resources and authority you allocate to me and I redouble my efforts to engage in true partnerships with you as we work to overcome the challenges of our time.

To our communities, neighborhoods, and residents, I recommit myself to an open, accountable, accessible police department responsive to your concerns and dedicated to partnering with you to solve problems. We will continue to learn from our mistakes and missteps - together. We will continuously work to earn your trust at the same time as we work with you to create neighborhoods capable of sustaining civic life.

This year marks my 45<sup>th</sup> year as a police officer. This month marks my 28<sup>th</sup> year as a law enforcement chief executive. I have seen many changes during those years but I have never seen the profession I love so challenged as it is today. As I look out at my colleagues in the audience, I want them to know that not every generation of police officers faces the same levels of challenge dealing with both crime and confidence as we do now. But I remind them, even as I remind myself, we do not have to do this; we get to do this. We accept the privilege of this challenge. And I exhort all of us to strive to be the best version of ourselves. To be the best police officers we can; to be the best police commanders we can be; and to be the best police department we can be, so that all of our profession can look to us as an example of the potential for both effective crime control and strong community relations when a single police department accepts the challenge of being the best version of American policing.

Now I would be proud to have all sworn – and recruit – members of my Department stand and join me in reciting our Oath of Honor.